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ON PAGE C-6

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

15 April 1983

Ron denies plotting against Nicaragua

By HARRISON RAINIE and BARBARA REHM

Washington (News Bureau)—President Reagan said yesterday the United States is "not doing anything" to overthrow the Marxist regime in Nicaragua but is trying to cut the military supply lines to the rebels in neighboring El Salvador.

In a brief press conference, the President insisted "we are complying with the law" that bars covert aid to guerrillas trying to overthrow the Nicaraguan government. "We are complying with that fully."

"Anything we are doing in that area is simply trying to interdict supply lines, which are supplying the guerrillas in El Salvador," Reagan asserted. The U.S.-backed regime in El Salvador has battled leftist guerrillas with limited success for nearly four years.

Reagan denounced Nicaragua for itself "trying to overthrow the government of a neighboring country, El Salvador, which has a duly elected government and which is going to hold another election before this year is out."

THE ADMINISTRATION has come under bitter attack by congressmen who fear the U.S. has violated the charter of the Organization of American States and also U.S. laws that forbid any covert operation to overthrow the Nicaragua government.

Congressmen who have traveled to the region—or have received intelligence briefings by the CIA and State Department—charged that U.S. covert operations have gone beyond Washing-

ton's goal of intercepting arms shipments. The congressmen charge the U.S. is actively training and supporting groups that aim to overthrow the Nicaraguan regime.

Reagan charged that Nicaragua has amassed the largest army in the region, with 25,000 men, backed by a 50,000-troop militia, and armed with sophisticated Soviet weapons. He characterized its opposition as "a few thousand Miskito Indians and guerrillas" and suggested they were too weak to pose a challenge to Nicaragua's "great military force."

REAGAN ALSO said the Nicaraguans broke their promise to hold democratic elections after they overthrew the late dictator Anastasio Somoza in 1979.

Reagan criticized U.S. laws that "restrict foreign policy towards a single country," but he insisted that his administration would never break such laws.

However, those laws came under fire yesterday by other senior White House aides, including counselor Edwin Meese, as an "undesirable hindrance" to American foreign policy.